

## BOOK REVIEWS

**SYMPOSIUM ON NUTRITION.** Edited by S.H. Davies. (Pp 123. Price not stated).  
Edinburgh: Royal College of Physicians, 1980.

THIS short book consists of nine lectures given at a recent symposium in the University of Edinburgh. The topics cover a wide range of interest from nutrition in the fetus to nutrition in the elderly. Most of the chapters are well written and give an overview of the subject. The general conclusion from reading the book is that there is little evidence that malnutrition in general or deficiencies of particular nutrients is an important cause of ill health in this country. Malnutrition, particularly in the elderly, is most often a consequence of disease or disability rather than its cause. Two interesting chapters cover topics outside the usual experience of doctors—Nutrition and Dental Health (by Professor D.J. Stewart of Belfast) and the Effect of Cessation of Free School Milk (the effect seems to be minimal). It is appropriate that the symposium closes with a chapter on myths about nutrition by Dr. Magnus Pyke. It appears that nutrition is a subject which has attracted more myths than most. This book is easy to read and is a useful summary of current knowledge of nutrition.

R.W.S.

**THE PHARMACOLOGICAL BASIS OF THERAPEUTICS.** Edited by A.G. Gilman, L.S. Goodman and A. Gilman. Sixth Edition. (Pp 1843, Figs 100. £28.00). London: Balliere Tindall, 1980.

IT was a pleasure to receive the latest edition of this textbook. In the forty years from publication of the first edition, Goodman and Gilman has become widely established as the most authoritative textbook of pharmacology and therapeutics; its pre-eminence is maintained by the publication of this edition. The editors should be congratulated in maintaining the publication of a new edition every five years during the last fifteen years. Although the appearance and format of this edition resemble those of previous editions considerable changes have been made in its contents. Many of the authors who had contributed to several of the previous editions have been succeeded by younger specialists who have completely re-written many chapters of the book (the publishers claim that nearly half of the chapters have been re-written). Although modern concepts in pharmacology, clinical pharmacology and therapeutics are given full attention, the authors have succeeded in restricting expansion of the book by reducing the amount of information on older drugs to provide space for newer drugs. There is an increase in pagination from the fifth to sixth editions of about 130 pages but this arises largely from a new chapter on "Principles of Therapeutics" and an appendix on "Pharmacokinetic Data". The information contained in this appendix will be most useful as it is often difficult to obtain; furthermore that data is backed by a comprehensive bibliography. One of the most valuable additions to the book is a chapter on "Prostaglandins, prostacycline and thromboxane  $A_2$ " by John Vane and his colleagues. This chapter gives a very clear history and description of these fascinating substances and is followed by a chapter by the same authors on the mechanism of action and effects of the anti-inflammatory drugs.

This book contains an enormous amount of information which is clearly presented with appropriate use of headings to split up the text into sections which can be easily read or searched for some particular piece of information. All aspects of drug use are covered including historical aspects, mechanism of action, clinical pharmacology, therapeutic use, adverse effects, etc. Each chapter is concluded by an extensive bibliography.

This book is to be recommended to all those who prescribe drugs. It is too large to be used by medical students as a routine textbook but should be consulted on occasions for additional information. All hospital libraries and many hospital wards should keep it as a standard reference book. Furthermore it is to be hoped that its pages will be perused at leisure to provide further information that will improve the use of drugs.

R.G.S.

**VENEREAL DISEASE.** By A. King, C. Nichol and P. Rodin. Fourth Edition. (Pp 419, Figs 190, Plates 15. £14.00). London: Bailliere Tindall, 1981.

THE fourth edition of King and Nicol is as usual easily read, informative and eminently suitable for medical students or general physicians.

My only criticism would be that not enough attention has been given to the Chlamydial infections which now cause a large percentage of sexually transmitted disease.

T.H.